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Gülşah Terzi

Institute of Graduate Studies, English Language and Literature, Istanbul Aydın University

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An Analysis of "The Monk" from the Perspective of Gothic

Matthew Lewis's "The Monk" is a classic gothic book that came out for the first time in 1796. It is known for having dark and scary themes, and it is often thought of as a gothic literature work. The main aim of this study is to clarify the purpose of gothic elements including the "uncanny" and the ideas of "horror" and "terror," based on what Ann Radcliffe says. Besides, it will provide a conceptual theoretical framework based on how these terms relate to the "experience of the sublime," and where "The Monk" might fit on Todorov's scale of narrative uncertainty.

The first aspect to point out is that "The Monk" carries a set of Gothic features and is full of dark elements that make the story feel mysterious, scary, and dangerous. One of these is the "uncanny," which is something that is both strange and familiar at the same time. The supernatural things that happen in "The Monk," like ghosts showing up and the Bleeding Nun stalking the Abbey, add to the creepiness of the story. These strange parts add to the book's overall dark feel and make you feel uneasy and curious. Ann Radcliffe says that "The Monk" has parts of horror and terror. Radcliffe said that the difference between horror and terror is that horror is a physical feeling of disgust and distaste, while terror is a psychological fear of the unknown. In "The Monk," there is a lot of horror in the grotesque and macabre images of demons, like Lucifer, who is a figure of pure evil (Williams, 2019). On the other hand, terror is created by the way the main character, Ambrosio, battles with his own moral dilemmas and the results of his actions. The way horror and terror interact in "The Monk" creates a sense of psychological unease and suspense, which adds to the book's gothic feel (Castro et al., 2022).

It would be unfair not to mention that fact that the book is mostly covered by the concepts of the Sublime. In aesthetics, the sublime is a feeling of awe, wonder, and great beauty that is often found in nature. In "The Monk," the sublime is not just about nature. It is also connected to the supernatural and the characters' feelings. For example, the dark and mysterious

landscapes, like the haunted Abbey and the empty mountains, give the reader a feeling of sublime fear. The supernatural parts of the book, like the characters' supernatural powers and the occult practices, add to the novel's majesty and heighten the feeling of awe and wonder(Wright, 2017).

Another point highlights that fact that the psychological or emotional experiences of the characters, particularly Ambrosio's, also contribute to the idea of the sublime in "The Monk." The reader is confronted with the overpowering feelings of fear, sorrow, and remorse as Ambrosio devolves further and further into insanity and performs horrific actions(Blake, 2021). The characters' overwhelming feelings are portrayed in a manner that is larger-than-life, which creates a heightened sense of wonder and dread. These powerful emotional experiences inspire a sense of emotional sublime(Adams, 2017).

It is worth stating at the point that how Todorov's Scale of Narrative Ambiguity could be connected to the novel. Todorov established a scale of narrative ambiguity that divides gothic literature into three categories: the uncanny, the marvelous, and the fantastic. These categories correspond to the uncanny, the marvelous, and the fantastic, respectively. The term "uncanny" is used to describe a narrative in which supernatural occurrences are eventually explained by natural causes; the term "marvelous" is used to describe a narrative in which supernatural occurrences are accepted as part of the reality; and the term "fantastic" is used to describe a narrative in which supernatural occurrences remain unexplained, leaving the reader in a state of ambiguity. Uncanny, marvelous, and fantastic are all literary terms(Hudson, 2018).

The most satisfactory conclusion that can be drawn is that "The Monk" by M. Lewis is a prime example of Gothic literature and incorporates various Gothic features, such as the uncanny, horror, fear, and the supernatural. This makes "The Monk" an excellent example of Gothic writing. The novel also has certain elements of the sublime, most notably in the way it describes nature. The reader is left with a sense of dread and foreboding, which is a defining

characteristic of Gothic writing and is helped along by the employment of certain Gothic traits and notions. According to Todorov's scale, "The Monk" is classified as uncanny since it is proven to contain aspects of the supernatural. On reflection, it seems more accurate to say that ‘‘The Monk’’ places it in the "uncanny" category.

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